

2008 BMFL Parents' Handbook



www.bismarckmidgetfootball.com

INTRODUCTION

On behalf of our sponsors, coaches, board members and countless other volunteers that enable the Bismarck Midget Football League (BMFL) to be a premier organization for the benefit of area youth, welcome to the 2008 season!

The BMFL is now in its 35th year with 12 teams of 22 each for a total of 264 players. Last year, we added cheerleading allowing even more children the opportunity to participate in a great American tradition.

As you read through our handbook, we hope that you will find useful information about our league. Some of the included information provides background on how we are organized, your options if you encounter any problems, as well as a code of conduct for parents and children.

The information in this booklet is strictly a guide and can be changed or discontinued at any time by the board of directors without notice.

We sincerely hope that you and your child enjoy the 2008 football season, playing and cheering for the world's greatest sport – **FOOTBALL!** Have a great season.

Sincerely,

Bismarck Midget Football League

BMFL MISSION STATEMENT

Bismarck Midget Football League (BMFL) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization operated by dedicated volunteers whose mission is to enable participants (ages 10-12) the opportunity to benefit from participation in team sports and activities (football & cheerleading) in a safe and structured environment. Through this active participation, BMFL programs teach fundamental values, skills and knowledge that children will use throughout their lives. We are dedicated to sportsmanship, teamwork and fair play.

WHAT PARENTS CAN EXPECT FROM BMFL

- Parents can expect the League to provide opportunities for children to be instructed in football and cheerleading fundamentals by highly motivated volunteers.
- BMFL will establish and maintain a website. Please check the site often for up-to-date information. The site is www.bismarckmidgetfootball.com.
- Parents can expect their children to actively participate in all practices.
- BMFL will provide practice fields for each team. It is our goal to have your team's practice field close to your home; however, we are limited by available facility locations and the number of participants from different areas of town. Also, please be advised that some teams may have to change practice locations during the course of the season due to scheduling conflicts or field conditions. These changes may be beyond the league's control.
- BMFL will provide fields for each game. Regular season games will be played at the Hughes Sports complex. We expect to play some championship games at the Bismarck Community Bowl.
- BMFL will provide professional, licensed referees certified in High School and College football. Please remember that they are human, and therefore occasionally may make an officiating error; it is part of the game. Game decisions are NEVER reversed because of officiating.
- BMFL is responsible for most of the equipment that each player requires: The League will issue each player a helmet, shoulder pads, practice pants, game pants, pants pads, girdle pads and game jersey. At the conclusion of the year, all equipment items are to be returned in good condition. Parents must provide practice jerseys, mouth guards, jockey "hard" cups, socks and cleats.
- All cheerleader uniforms are the responsibility of the parents.
- Parents or legal guardians have the right to remove their child from participation at any time.
- Parents should expect the highest standards of conduct from all BMFL football coaches, cheerleading coaches and adult volunteers. League policy forbids alcohol, tobacco or drug use at all official BMFL games and practices. Additionally, no foul or obscene language, physical, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, or bullying will be tolerated by any coaches or volunteers.
- BMFL coaches will treat each player, cheerleader, parents/guardians and fans with respect at all times. In return, please show consideration for all personnel connected with the league at all times. **ANY PHYSICAL, VERBAL OR PERSONAL ABUSE TOWARD AN OFFICIAL OR VOLUNTEER BEFORE, DURING OR AFTER A GAME WILL BRING IMMEDIATE REMOVAL FROM THE LEAGUE OF THE VIOLATING PLAYERS OR PARENT/GUARDIAN. THIS IS A ZERO TOLERANCE RULE.**
- BMFL does **NOT** carry medical insurance for players or cheerleaders. This is the responsibility of each participant's parent/guardian.

WHAT PARENTS SHOULD KNOW

- BMFL has a “No Refund” policy after the first practice. Refunds will be available before the first practice, less \$20 for administrative costs. This means, no refunds for any reason, to include injury, sickness, medical excuse, moving out of town, desire to play a different sport, school issues, fighting, dislikes the coach or teammates, practice field is too far away, etc.
- BMFL expects full payment with registration. As soon as these funds are received, the League pays for uniforms, equipment, operational insurance, rental of practice fields, game fields, officiating and other expenses associated with League operation.
- All football players must complete a North Dakota High School Activities Association Athletic Pre-participation physical. A copy of physical form **MUST** be on file **BEFORE** any Equipment is issued. Physicals are valid for two years. Forms are available at local medical clinics or can be downloaded at:
www.bismarckmidgetfootball.com/forms/Physical_Examination_Form_A.pdf.
- BMFL will issue most football equipment and uniforms. Parents are required to return the equipment and uniform at the end of the season on the designated dates announced by the League. Failure to return the borrowed equipment will result in the League charging the responsible parent/guardian \$250 (cost of the equipment) and any collection costs (including attorney fees, if required).
- BMFL expects each parent to abide by the same code of conduct required of the volunteers working with your children. This includes **NO ALCOHOL, TOBACCO OR DRUG USE** at ANY BMFL event to include practice. No obscene language and no physical, emotional or sexual abuse toward any player or cheerleader will be tolerated. Like coaches, parents/guardians should be role models for every child on their football or cheer team. Please remember to praise your child and other members of the team for their hard work and accomplishments.
- Treat all coaches with respect and dignity and they reciprocate. They are volunteers who contribute their time and talents for the benefit of your children. You may not always agree with a coach's decision, however, he/she has the final say on their football or cheer team.
- The most successful teams are not necessarily determined by their won-loss record or ability to coordinate a cheer routine, but by the level of support that parents/guardians/family members provide them and their coaches. Please volunteer your time and talents when requested. Coaches unanimously agree that support, encouragement and time are the most valuable commodities that parents and guardians can provide. A unified football or cheer team with support, loyalty and encouragement is a winner. This shows children the value of teamwork.
- BMFL expects all fans to control their emotions at games. Officials are human and fans may not always agree with their decisions. However, keep in mind, that parents/guardians’ behavior sends a message to children. There are lessons to be taught in victories, as well as defeats. At the end of the game, talk to your children. Share your feelings in a positive way.
- Coaches have the right to remove any parent, player, or volunteer, from any BMFL event (including practice), who is creating a disturbance, not abiding by the code of conduct, or creating an unhealthy environment for children, without a refund, pending review by the League’s ‘Grievance Committee’.

WHAT PARENTS SHOULD KNOW (continued)

- BMFL has observed that some parents have a tendency to re-live their youth through their children. Please remember that your children do not think like an adult. Football or cheerleading may not be easy for them; they must be allowed to learn and develop at their own speed. Don't expect them to play or cheer at a high school level. Respectfully, parents, you've had your turn. It is now your children's day in the sun. Let them develop and shine.
- You are not paying for the right to choose a position for your child; otherwise we would have 22 quarterbacks on a team. The coaches decide positions.
- If you believe that you are being treated unfairly, please talk to your coach first. If that fails to satisfactorily address your issues, submit a league grievance form and the League's 'Grievance Committee' will review and follow the procedures outlined on the form. Please remember that BMFL grievance decisions are FINAL. Involving the 'Grievance Committee' may cause a coach, parent/guardian and/or the player to be dismissed from the league without refund of deposit. *It is always best to settle issues with coaches first hand.* Any parent/guardian that does not follow this procedure will be in jeopardy of losing their privilege and their child's privilege to participate in the League without a refund.
- BMFL grievance form is available in the back of this booklet and online at www.bismarckmidgetfootball.com/forms/grievance_form.pdf.
- Parents/guardians are responsible for inspecting their player's football equipment prior to practices or games. Ensure all equipment is present and serviceable; i.e., helmet screws are present and tight; shoulder pad straps have buckles; all pads are in place in the pants, etc. If you have questions, talk to your coaches. Bottom line. Parents/guardians have the responsibility to inspect their child's equipment for serviceability.
- BMFL expects parents/guardians to get their child to practice and games on time. On game day, children are inspected for proper equipment. It is a parental responsibility to ensure each player has all items present (including jockey "hard" cup and mouth piece) in order to play. If your child is not properly equipped to play or cheer, they will be declared ineligible to participate.
- A coach may exercise his discretion to not allow a child to play in a game if he misses two practices in a week. Additionally, the coach may discipline a child by not allowing him to play in the game if the player is not following the team rules or directions of the coach.
- Parents/guardians have the right to inspect the League Rules.
- Parents are required to provide a photocopy of a birth certificate. Once this is collected, this information is reviewed by the League or coaches for verification of eligibility of the player.
- If a team has ineligible players, or cheating occurs of any kind, the team will be investigated and, if needed, suspended. Ineligible players will be removed from the team and, if necessary, at the discretion of the League, an entire team may be disqualified from postseason play. Reporting ineligible players is everyone's responsibility. Let these children learn to play by the league rules and they will play by rules in life.
- It is parents' responsibility to inspect the practice fields and game fields and any other event sponsored by the BMFL for safety. You have the final approval for your child's safety in BMFL events. If you feel something is unsafe, remove your child from that event.

QUITTING POLICY

- Tackle football is not like soccer, basketball, baseball, hockey or softball. These sports are contact sports, whereas football is a collision sport. In every play in football, every player has the potential to collide with an opponent. It is part of the game.
- Full contact football is a new experience to a number of kids each year while some may have played for a couple of seasons. Nevertheless, some kids have a tough time dealing with contact sports at this age and we should accept this fact with judgment. Some players that drop out at this age eventually return to football at a later age when they are ready to accept the contact aspects of the sport.
- If your child does not want to continue to play football at this age, please accept their decision and allow them to walk away with dignity and an understanding that this type of sport may not be for them at this time. And that's ok.
- Individuals who DO NOT wish to continue to play football in the BMFL need to contact their head coach immediately to return equipment.
- NO REFUNDS WILL BE ISSUED AFTER THE FIRST PRACTICE.
- Failure to return all BMFL Equipment will result in a \$250 fine plus collection fees.

PLAYER REPLACEMENT POLICY

The BMFL will allow individuals to play in the first game of the season as long as they have attended and participated in at least two weeks of practice. For example, if an individual quits, the league would assign a replacement player who would be allowed to play after the second week of practice. If a player joins a team a week before the first game, they would not be eligible to play in the first game of the season. NO NEW PLAYERS WILL BE PLACED after the first game of the season.

GUIDELINES FOR A SUCCESSFUL SEASON

One of the most important tasks that we parents (and coaches) face is to prepare our children for life. Children must learn to overcome fears and failures, try new things and to deal with success, as well as failure. Sometimes, coaches and parents/guardians wrongfully view sports with a life-or-death goal of winning. As parents and coaches, we should teach children to play to win, but also teach them appropriate behavior when we lose. Parents and coaches teach appropriate behavior by setting a good example; through actions and words. Winning is not everything; losing can teach children to adapt, modify behavior, enhance skills and to persevere. The challenge of parents and coaches, as role models, is to teach through our own actions, appropriate social skills and behaviors. Working together, we can teach each child the value of good sportsmanship.

Do...

- Place an emphasis on participation, effort and good attitude, not winning.
- Teach your child that doing their best as a player is as equally as important as winning.
- Support your child with your presence and positive cheering at practice and games.
- Comment on their good effort. Always be encouraging.
- Leave coaching to the coaches.
- Show self-control and enjoyment while your child is playing or cheering.
- Teach and demonstrate to children to play by the rules.
- Give positive reinforcement to your players and the other team's players.
- Applaud ALL good plays and efforts for BOTH teams.
- If your child makes a mistake, first point out the good things they have done before discussing mistakes. Consider doing this away from the other players.
- Treat all players, coaches and officials as you would like to be treated.
- Cheer along with the cheerleaders.
- Practice and play with your child. Every child wants their parents to be interested in what they are doing. GET INVOLVED.

Do Not...

- Force a child to play football or participate in cheering if they don't want to play or cheer.
- Yell at your child for making mistakes.
- Criticize or put down a teammate, opposing player, cheerleader, coach or official when discussing a practice or game with your child.
- Make exaggerated facial expressions or hand signals to your child while they are playing.
- Question, confront or yell at a coach, official or another parent about the game at the game field. Wait at least 24 hours then use the phone to visit with him or her.
- Yell negative comments at opposing teams.
- Put all the emphasis on winning.

PARENTAL GUIDELINES TO ATHLETIC SUPPORT

- Academics should always come first. Help your child manage their time so that their grades are acceptable to you.
- Promote a good lifestyle (work ethic, diet, sleep, no alcohol, drugs or tobacco) for your child.
- Encourage all of the players and cheerleaders (these are both team sports); dwell on positive contributions, don't criticize.
- Support the style of play of the team. You are not going to change it by your comments; you will only leave the players doubting the coaches. Don't try to do the coach's job.
- Promote good sportsmanship by example.
- Do not compare other teammates to your child. This is not fair to anyone involved. Everyone has different talents and abilities and contributes to the team in different ways.
- Allow your child to make mistakes and learn, find solutions to their problems, and fight their own battles. This is what they will have to do for themselves in life.
- Do not talk to a coach about a problem until 24 hours after an event, unless it's positive. Do not discuss playing time; this is a coach's decision.
- Encourage your child to talk to the coach privately first; being able to speak for yourself is a very valuable life skill to learn.
- Football is a game. Smile, enjoy the efforts on the field, and have fun. If you do, the chances are much greater that your child will also have fun!
- Cheerleading is an important part of any good sports program. Support your cheerleaders by participating in their cheers.
- TRUST the coaches and the league to do what is right for the athletes (as people and players) and the program. We are all on the same side, creating an atmosphere of fun and learning the game of football and cheerleading skills. If you don't have sufficient trust in the League, you should considering involving your child in a situation where trust exists.

2008 BMFL FOOTBALL RULES

1. GENERAL:

- a. BMFL follows the North Dakota High School Football Rules with some exceptions:
 - 1) Playing Field is 80 yards long, regulation width (53-1/3 yards).
 - 2) Kickoffs are from the kicking team's 35 yard line.
 - 3) Major penalties are 10 yards.
 - 4) The four quarters are twelve minutes in length and are on a continuous clock.
 - i. Exceptions (time stops) to the continuous clock are:
 - 1. Last two minutes of the 2nd and 4th quarters, the clock will follow normal high school football rules; i.e., stops on incomplete passes and out of bounds plays.
 - 2. During timeouts (1 minute).
 - 3. During attempts for a point after touchdown (time will be stopped after a touchdown and will not start until the ensuing kickoff).
 - 4. During equipment repair.
 - 5. During injuries. Injured player must leave the game for one play.
 - 5) There are two (2) minutes between quarters and ten (10) minutes between halves.
 - 6) Teams have twenty-five (25) seconds to put ball in play after referee has signaled "ready." This will be enforced with a five yard "delay of game" penalty.
 - 7) 'Red' and 'Blue' circle stickers on players' helmets indicate players who are NOT eligible to advance the ball.
 - i. Players weighing between 101 and 145 pounds will be marked with a red circle sticker on their helmet. These players must play on the offensive line but may play anywhere on defense.
 - ii. Players weighing over 145 pounds will be marked with a blue circle sticker on their helmet. The following rules apply only to blue circle marked players.
 - 1. On offense, these players are limited to positions on the offensive line between the tight ends.
 - 2. On defense, these players are limited to the three interior defensive line positions (nose guard and tackles).
 - 3. These players **CANNOT** play on any Special Teams (i.e., kick-offs, kick receiving, punting or punt receiving).
- b. Teams will line up to shake hands and congratulate each other immediately following games.
- c. Post-game huddles are encouraged involving the **coaches and players only**.
- d. One coach from the offensive team may be on the field, ten yards behind the line of scrimmage during the game. The coach is only allowed to interact with the players in the huddle.
- e. Defensive coaches are not allowed on the field during games except for timeouts.

BMFL FOOTBALL RULES (continued)

2. OFFENSE:

- a. No offensive backs, wide receivers or flankers may weigh over 100 pounds, the league ball-carrying weight limit.
- b. No player over the ball-carrying weight limit may legally catch a ball while playing offense. The pass will be ruled incomplete.
- c. No one over the ball-carrying weight may advance the ball. Defensive players over the ball-carrying weight may intercept a pass, recover a fumble, or field a kickoff. The ball will be ruled dead at the spot of recovery.
- d. No unbalanced offensive line formations. There must be 7 offensive linemen, 3 on each side of the center.
- e. One back in motion is permitted and is subjected to the normal rules of football.

3. DEFENSE:

- a. All defensive alignments must consist of a five player front; three defensive linemen and two defensive ends.
- b. Except for the five defensive linemen, all other defensive players must position themselves and remain at least three (3) yards from the line of scrimmage until the ball is put into play.
- c. Inside the defense's own 5 yard line, all non-defensive line players must position themselves and remain at least one (1) yard from the line of scrimmage until the ball is put into play.
- d. No blitzing is permitted.
 - 1) Only the five defensive front players may cross the line of scrimmage before the ball carrier has reached the line of scrimmage or a point to the outside where the tight ends initially lined-up. Once the ball has reached these points, the defensive backs and linebackers are free to pursue the ball carrier at their discretion.
 - 2) This rule is one of judgment on the part of the defensive backs and linebackers.

4. PUNTS:

- a. On fourth down situations, offensive teams will be asked if they will punt or attempt to gain a first down.
- b. Once a team declares their intention to punt, fake punts are not permitted.
- c. Both punting and punt receiving teams must position seven (7) players on the line of scrimmage from tight-end to tight-end in a "Down Position" (three or four point stance) until the punt is made.
- d. Punt receiving team may not attempt to block the punt.
- e. The punt will be re-attempted if the punter misses or drops the ball.
- f. If the punt hits an offensive lineman, the punt is playable.

BMFL FOOTBALL RULES (continued)

- g. If the punt hits a defensive lineman while they are in the “Down Position”, the punt is playable. However, if the punt hits a defensive player who prematurely stands up, it will be considered an attempt to block the kick and is an infraction. The defense will be penalized 5 yards and play is resumed either with another punt or a play from scrimmage. This penalty is not an automatic first down. The offense must again declare its intentions to either punt or attempt to gain a first down.
- h. Fair Catches are permitted.

5. POINT AFTER TOUCHDOWN (PAT) CONVERSIONS:

- a. Pass – Two (2) points.
- b. Run – One (1) point.
- c. Kick – One (1) point (if goal posts are in play).

6. THE 13-19 RULE:

- a. If at any time during the first half, a team is ahead of the other team by 13 or more points, the leading team must replace the entire starting (First Team) offensive backfield. This backfield (Quarterback and running backs) is defined as the normal first team backfield, not necessarily the backfield that is on the field at that time. The replacement offensive backfield must continue to play until the difference is reduced to 7 points or less or until the 1st half ends.
- b. The “First team” backfield may begin the 2nd half and play until the spread is 19 points or more. The replacement backfield then plays until the spread is 13 points or less.
- c. In the event of an injury to a replacement back, an attempt to replace the injured player with another Non-Starting player will be made, if possible.
- d. Any player can play defense at any time.

7. PLAYING TIME:

- a. All players are guaranteed a minimum of one (1) quarter of play in all games.
- b. For reference: one (1) quarter is approximately 8 to 12 plays, but variables such as available possessions, player positions and time on the clock are key issues coaches must face in playing kids the minimum one (1) quarter.
- c. The league would like to see all kids play as much as possible but it must be realized that some individuals will play more than others due to individual reasons. Coaches have the final say in playing time matters

8. UNSPORTSMANLIKE PENALTIES:

- a. Players receiving unsportsmanlike penalties will be ejected from the game.
- b. A second violation will result in a one game suspension.
- c. A third violation will result in player suspension for the remainder of the season.

Revised and Approved Aug 2008

2008 – PLANNING DATES

March 15 – May 15	Registration opens and closes respectively.
May 15 – Jun 15	Placement work completed/individuals notified
Aug 12 – 14	Parent and player orientation and equipment issue nights (Wachter Gym)
Aug 17	First practice allowed
Sept 6	Regular season begins
Oct 4	Last regular season game
Oct 11	Playoffs begin
Oct 17	Coaches' Dinner and election of officers for 2009
Oct 18 – 19	Championship games (Bismarck Community Bowl)
Oct 24	Equipment return (6 – 8pm) (Hughes Gym – 806 N. Washington Street)
Oct 25	Equipment return (9 – 11am) (Hughes Gym)

For updated information please visit:

www.bismarckmidgetfootball.com

EQUIPMENT RETURN INFORMATION

Where: (Hughes Gym – 806 N. Washington Street)

When: Oct 24 (6 – 8pm) & Oct 25 (9-11am)

Equipment checklist

1. Game Jersey

- Washed

2. Black Game Pants

- Washed (remove thigh and knee pads)

3. White Practice Pants

- Washed
- Please install thigh and knee pads

4. Girdle Pad Shorts

- Washed
- Please install hip and tailbone pads
- Remove all knot from laces & replace laces if needed

5. Helmet

- Remove decals (i.e., team logos, stripes, red or blue circles, etc.)
- **DO NOT REMOVE WARNING LABELS**
- Ensure chinstrap and both cheek pads are attached
- Clean with soap & water

6. Shoulder Pads

- Remove tape & other debris
- Clean with soap & water
- REMOVE ALL KNOTS from laces & replace laces if needed

We will inspect equipment to insure all of the above conditions are met.

Please *identify needed repairs* on all equipment. The more you do to get the equipment ready for next season will help volunteers complete the task more efficiently and save the league money.

If you cannot return equipment during the designated time PLEASE:

- **Designate someone to turn the equipment in for you**

OR

- **Contact the League or your coach to make other arrangements**

Please refer to “Parents Handbook” (What PARENTS SHOULD KNOW)

“BMFL will issue most football equipment and uniforms. Parents are required to return the equipment and uniform at the end of the season on the designated dates announced by the League. Failure to return the borrowed equipment will result in the League charging the responsible parent/guardian \$250 (cost of the equipment) and any collection costs (including attorney fees, if required). ”



GRIEVANCE FORM

The Bismarck Midget Football League Grievance Form provides an avenue for individuals to voice their opinions on different issues involving the league, coaches, and operations of the league.

The league will not consider a grievance submitted in any other format.

Name: _____

Address: _____

E-mail: _____

Phone Number: _____

Player Name: _____

Team: _____

What is the issue? (If more room is needed, use second sheet of paper)

What is your solution? (The complaint will not be addressed unless you recommend a solution)

Grievances filed against a coach of the league will only be considered if you have contacted and attempted to resolve the issue(s) with the coach(es) prior to submitting a grievance with the league. If the grievance involves one of the league committee members, that member will step aside and not be part of the grievance decision.

All grievances will be reviewed at the completion of the season unless it is decided that the grievance must be addressed immediately.

The Grievance Committee will review the grievance and decide if the complaint is justified. If the grievance is deemed justified by the committee the committee will recommend whether to address the issue and/or forward the grievance to the Board of Directors.

The person initiating the grievance and all effected parties will receive notification of the final decision within ten (10) days after the review.

Any recommendations from the Grievance Committee will be FINAL. (This could mean ejection of the coach, board member, the player(s) and/or parents/guardians from the league.)

Mail completed form to:

BMFL

PO Box 1702

Bismarck, North Dakota 58502-1702